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23 April 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Legislation to Establish a Joint Committee
on the Budget

1. On 23 April, I talked with Walter Reynolds, Staff Director of the Senate Government Operations Committee, regarding legislation which has been introduced in the Congress to establish a Joint Committee on the Budget.

2. Referring to the Committee's hearings on the current bill, S. 537, and noting that similar legislation has been reported by the Committee and passed by the Senate in every Congress since the 82nd only to die in the House, I asked Mr. Reynolds if he could give me some of the reasons for House opposition. Mr. Reynolds indicated that in past Congresses the focal points of opposition in the House have been Speaker Rayburn and Representative Clarence Cannon, Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations. Mr. Reynolds referred to the increasing animosity between the House and Senate Appropriations Committees specifically referring to the subject of the House's contention that all money bills must originate in that body. He said that in the hearing to which I referred, his Committee has, in his opinion, set forth sound reasons, based on extensive research by his staff, that the Constitution of the United States does not necessarily preclude the Senate from originating appropriation bills. Mr. Reynolds regards this as a significant breakthrough in this area of controversy. He mentioned in passing a number of factors such as the House's irritation at references to the Senate as the "senior body" and other areas of friction between the two houses, pointing out that in his opinion the House Appropriations Committee deliberately delays action on appropriation bills until late in a congressional session forcing the Senate to consider these measures in haste.

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3. Mr. Reynolds also stated that much of the opposition in the House is based on an erroneous assumption that the establishment of a Joint Committee on the Budget would deprive the Appropriations Committees of certain of their perogatives. In response to my question as to the Senate Appropriations Committee's position on these bills, he said, in confidence, that the Senate Appropriations Committee has, in fact, asked Senator McClellan to introduce the Joint Committee bills. He said that the function of such a Joint Committee would be to review how appropriated funds are expended, an area given little attention by the Appropriations Committees under the present system. In this regard, he cited as an example the field of research and development where there is much waste and duplication among Government agencies. He specifically mentioned AEC and NASA in this regard. He also mentioned that former Speaker Rayburn ahad opposed Joint Committees in general and had opposed the establishment of the JCAE which, in Reynold's opinion, should never have been established as a Legislative committee, for it took away from the Science and Astronautics Committees areas properly under their jurisdiction.

4. This was obviously a subject on which Mr. Reynolds had very strong feelings, for he spoke at great length on it. From my conversation with him I feel that he is optimistic that in time this type of legislation will eventually pass the House (he mentioned that Representative Ben Jensen, ranking minority member of the House Appropriations Committee, had introduced in the House a bill introduced by Senator McClellan in the Senate). However, I think he is realistic enough to know that although the changes may be better, it is still doubtful that favorable House action will be taken in this Congress.



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